

DCI/IC 77-6371

25 OCT 1977

Executive Registry

117-2368/6

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: John N. McMahon
Acting Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence CommunitySUBJECT: Proposed Priority Changes,
Attachment to DCID 1/2 ☐

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REFERENCE: NFIB-5.1/65, same subject, 3 October 1977

1. ☐ Action Requested: That you approve the proposed priority changes as listed in the reference. All NFIB members concurred except the Director, NSA whose comments are attached for your information.

2. ☐ Background: The proposed priority changes reflect the current importance and effort given to NATO and MBFR-related topics. Specifically, the priorities relate directly to intelligence support which is of major importance to US and NATO negotiating tactics and objectives. NSA has provided somewhat adverse comments, but I do not believe that they should stand in the way of your approval of the recommended priority changes.

a. (U) NSA asserts incorrectly that the DCID 1/2 priorities system is not judgmental. The system is highly judgmental. While the criteria for structuring the requirements matrix is objective, the actual matching of priorities with the criteria requires considerable judgment and is the product of extensive discussion and negotiation among our best informed people. The judgments draw upon the expertise of the NIOs, the DCI Committees, Community membership represented at the DCID 1/2 Ad Hoc Group, and the NFIB.

b. (S) NSA incorrectly relates the priorities of DCID 1/2 to budgetary resource constraints applied to intelligence collection in the SIGINT arena. In fact the document is not designed to provide budgetary guidance. Instead, DCID 1/2 provides basic substantive priorities for conducting current foreign intelligence activities. While current priorities play a part as a point of departure for the development of resource guidance, projected changes in requirements and priorities, expressed in the forthcoming mid-range element of the Planning System, will make the principal contribution.

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c. ☐ DCID 1/2 is not, as NSA asserts, a tasking document. Neither is it structured as an absolute value system where an increase in one priority must be accompanied by an equivalent decrease elsewhere. The system is a limited hierarchy of relative values which permits only eight priority choices in each of ☐ possible cases.

d. ☐ NSA disagrees with the notion that 21 additional priority 3's will have slight impact on the overall priority structure, suggesting that NSA is concerned with inflation of priorities. It should be noted that these changes represent only 0.16 of one per cent of all possible priorities and, if all are approved the total of all topics of priority three and above will still amount to only 2.6% of the total. The annual review of DCID 1/2 is designed to preserve the basic discipline of the priorities system. Experience indicates that the annual review adjusts priorities both upward and downward (indeed, the current issue of whether or not to continue ☐ flights resulted from the dowgrading of Southeast Asia priorities).

3. ☐ Staff Position: As noted, all NFIB members except NSA advise that these proposed priority changes be approved. Brigadier General Edward B. Atkeson will discuss apparent misconceptions about the system with Vice Admiral B. R. Inman independently.

4. ☐ Recommendation: That you approve the proposed priority changes as noted in the reference.

☐
John N. McMahon

Attachment
NSA memo, dated 18 October 1977,
same subject

APPROVED: /s/ Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence

DISAPPROVED: _____
Director of Central Intelligence

DATE: 4 NOV 1977

*Stan - we should
press on - even
though we are
reaching entire
equilibrium/priorities
mechanism*

J

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Next 4 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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